

Claims:

1. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream between a plurality of attendees connected to one another by a communications network comprising the steps of:

communicating a plurality of real time data streams from each of the plurality of attendees to all others of the plurality of attendees;

communicating a primary selection command to at least a portion of the plurality of attendees, said primary selection command designating at least one of said plurality of real time data streams communicated from at least one of the plurality of attendees as a primary stream; and,

using said primary selection command to identify said primary data stream at said at least a portion of the plurality of attendees.

2. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein the step of communicating a primary selection command to at least a portion of the plurality of attendees comprises communicating said primary selection command from one of the plurality of attendees to all others of the plurality of attendees.

3. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said primary selection command designates a plurality of said plurality of data streams as primary data streams.

4. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 3 wherein said primary selection command includes a priority ranking for said plurality of primary data streams.

5. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said at least one primary data stream is a video data

stream, and further including the step of at least some of said attendees displaying said primary data stream in a highlighted manner.

6. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 5 wherein the step of displaying said primary data stream in a highlighted manner comprises displaying said primary stream in a larger display size than any others of said plurality of data streams.

7. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 5 wherein the step of displaying said primary data stream in a highlighted manner comprises displaying said primary stream using a display template.

8. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 7 wherein said screen display template includes a designated position for displaying said primary data stream.

9. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of real time data streams has an identifier, and wherein said primary selection command includes said identifier corresponding to said primary data stream.

10. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of real-time data streams has a unique identifier, and wherein said primary selection command includes said unique identifier corresponding to said at least one primary data stream, and wherein the method further includes the step carried out by each of the plurality of attendees of storing said at least one primary data stream identifier in a memory after receiving said primary selection command, and of using said stored primary stream identifier to recognize said at least one primary data stream.

11. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein the plurality of real time data streams communicated from each of said plurality of attendees includes a plurality of real time video streams and at least one real time audio stream, and wherein said primary selection command designates at least one of said plurality of real time video streams from at least one of said plurality of attendees.

12. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 and further including the step of enforcing one or more rules that define where said primary selection command may be communicated from.

13. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 12 wherein said at least one rule calls for said primary selection command to be generated only from a designated one of said plurality of attendees, said at least one rule also allowing for said designated attendee to be changed to a different of said plurality of attendees.

14. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said primary selection command is communicated from a source connected to the network other than said plurality of attendees, and wherein said at least a portion of said plurality of attendees is all of said plurality of attendees.

15. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said primary selection command is communicated from a meeting facilitator connected to the network, said meeting facilitator monitoring all of said plurality of data streams but not communicating a video or audio data stream to said plurality of attendees, and wherein said at least a portion of said plurality of attendees is all of said plurality of attendees.

16. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said primary selection command includes a first primary selection command, and wherein the method further includes the step of communicating a second primary selection command to at least a portion of said plurality of attendees, said second primary selection command causing said at least one primary stream to be replaced by at least one second primary stream identified in said second primary selection command.

17. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 16 wherein said first primary selection command is communicated from a first of said plurality of attendees to all others of said plurality of attendees, and wherein said second primary selection command is communicated from a second of said plurality of attendees to all others of said plurality of attendees.

18. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream as defined by claim 1 wherein said plurality of attendees are a plurality of conference rooms participating in a virtual meeting, each of said conference rooms having a plurality of cameras that each generate a real time video signal and at least one microphone that generates a real time audio signal, and wherein said at least one primary data stream includes at least one video data stream.

19. A method for communicating at least one primary data stream between a plurality of attendees participating in a virtual meeting over a data network comprising the steps of:

carried out by a first of the plurality of attendees: communicating a plurality of real time data streams to all others of the plurality of attendees, said plurality of real time data streams including at least one video data stream and at least one audio data stream, selecting at least one of said plurality of real

time data video streams as a primary data stream, communicating a primary selection command identifying said at least one primary data stream to all others of the plurality of attendees; and,

carried out by all others of the plurality of attendees: receiving said plurality of real time data streams communicated from the first of the attendees, receiving said primary selection command communicated from the first of the attendees, using said primary selection command to recognize said primary data stream, and displaying said primary data stream in a highlighted manner.

20. A computer program product for communicating at least one primary data stream over a data network, the computer program product embodied in computer executable instructions stored in a computer readable medium, the instructions when executed causing one or more computers to:

communicate a first plurality of real time data streams to a plurality of attendees connected to the communications network, said first plurality of real time data streams including at least one video data stream and at least one audio data stream;

identify at least one of said plurality of real time data streams as a primary data stream;

communicate a first primary stream identification to said plurality of attendees, said first primary stream identification command identifying at least one of said first plurality of real time data streams as a first primary data stream;

receive a second plurality of real time data streams from said plurality of attendees, said second plurality of real time data streams including at least one video data stream and at least one audio data stream;

receive a second primary stream identification command from at least one of said plurality of attendees; and,

use said second primary stream identification command to identify at least one second primary data stream from said second plurality of real time data streams.

21. A computer program product as defined by claim 20 wherein said at least one second primary data stream is a real time video data stream, and wherein the computer program instructions further cause the one or more computers to display said second primary stream in a highlighted manner.